DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 369 115 CS 508 552

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TITLE Adapting Pfeiffer and Jones' Experiential Learning Model for Classroom Use.
PUB DATE Nov 93
NOTE 12p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Speech Communication Association (79th, Miami Beach, FL, November 18-21, 1993).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Guides - Classroom Use - Teaching Guides (For Teacher) (052) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Class Activities; *Experiential Learning; Group Dynamics; Higher Education; *Interpersonal Communication; Models; Sex Differences
IDENTIFIERS Communication Behavior

ABSTRACT

J. Pfeiffer and J. Jones' experiential learning model can be modified to direct students toward learning principles, processes and skills which have an influence on relationship dynamics. Students have a particular relationship in mind (called a focus partner) as they study the concepts. Students are encouraged to watch how the concepts would apply in all their other relationships. Small group assignments can be designed to allow for application and understanding of the concepts. Five steps complete the experiential learning cycle: (1) the activity phase (Experiencing); (2) sharing reactions and observations (Publishing); (3) discussing patterns and dynamics (Processing); (4) developing real world principles (Generalizing); and (5) planning effective use of learning (Applying). The instructor is involved in each of the five phases starting with creating the structured activity. Two major concepts ("Separating Worlds" and "Verification Feedback") and five supporting concepts ("Reactive Listening," "Reflective Listening," "Responsive Listening," "Paraphrasing," and "Whole Person Feedback") are introduced to students in the early part of the course. Students divide into dyads (or, at most, one triad with two students assuming one role of the dyad). Students assume the roles of "Jack" and "Mary," a married couple experiencing difficulties in their relationship. Students work through all five phases of the experiential learning model and apply the concepts they are learning in the course. Contains five references and a note on "brainsex" differences in communication dynamics; a description of the steps in using the adapted Pfeiffer and Jones experiential learning cycle is attached.) (RS)

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ED 369 115

1993 SPEECH COMMUNICATION ASSOCIATION

ANNUAL MEETING, MIAMI FLORIDA

NOVEMBER 18-21, 1993

Saturday, 2:30-3:50, Sale Board Room-Eden Roc Hotel

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING SPONSORED PROGRAM # 3561

"Adapting Pfeiffer and Jones' Experiential Learning Model for Classroom Use"

by

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The Pfeiffer & Jones' Experiential Learning Cycle

Experiential learning is based on how one learns in life--an inductive process. Each individual has experiences from which meanings are created. "The effectiveness of experiential learning is derived from the maxim that nothing is more relevant to us than ourselves. One's own reaction to, observations about, and understand of something are more important than someone else's opinion about it....one remembers what one *knows*--which derives from the experience--better than one remembers what one *knows about*--what one has read about or been told about." (Pfeiffer & Jones, 1990). The experiential learning cycle involves cognitive, affective and behavior levels of learning.

Classroom use of the model is based on experiences which are structured toward desired ends. As in life, no two people experience the same event in the exact same way. Individual perceptions create individual meanings. The guidance of the facilitator (instructor) helps direct the learning toward the desired outcomes. This is where the learnings the instructor would want to have the students experience becomes the basis for choosing (designing) the structured activity.

I have modified the model to direct the students toward learning principles, processes and skills which have an influence on relationship dynamics. Each student has a particular relationship in mind (called a focus partner) as he/she studies the concepts. Each student is encouraged to watch how the concepts would apply in all their other relationships--some of which are created in the structured activity. Small group assignments are further designed to allow for application and understanding of the concepts in relationship dynamics.

There are five steps to completing the Experiential Learning Cycle: 1- The Activity Phase (Experiencing), 2- Sharing Reactions and Observations (Publishing), 3- Discussing Patterns and Dynamics (Processing), 4- Developing Real World Principles (Generalizing) and 5- Planning Effective Use of Learning (Applying). The instructor is involved in each of the five phases starting with creating the structured activity. Many different forms of activity can be use: making products or models, analyzing case materials, role playing, guided imagery, verbal and nonverbal messages, solving problems, planning, negotiating or bargaining, etc. The importance of this phase of the cycle is to create a somewhat common data base for the following phases. Moving from the activity phase to, and through, the next phases is essential to the learning model.

The second phase is sharing something about the experience. This can be done between dyads, within small groups, individually or with the whole group. One of the important considerations in this step is for each participant to start to take ownership of what was experienced. What kinds of feelings did you have? How did you experience other group members? yourself? What did you observe happening to you? To maximize this phase I often ask one or two individuals to share their experience with the whole group and then have the others share with their partner or small group--based upon arrangements which were set before the activity phase took place.

The third phase of processing is looking at what is going on. How do things fit together? What patterns guide the interaction through which personal experiences are then transformed into personal meanings? Who plays what roles in the interaction? How might this relate to other relationships--are there patterns that are persistent within relationship dynamics?

The fourth phase is to make the generalizations--now what does this let us know? Now that we can see patterns (the what) of interaction, SO WHAT? What principles, processes or other dynamics can be observed so that new choices could be selected in other similar interactions that would assist the individual to reach desired results? This phase is one where I often have the students apply the interaction concepts, for this area of exploration, to the situation they experienced in the activity phase. They have read about the concepts and created some of their own wording (definition) for each concept. These can now be applied.

The fifth phase of the learning cycle is to move the generalizations (principles/concepts) from the experiential learning activity and apply them in another setting. Their focus partner relationship is one such assignment. They also have an assigned group sharing where the principles can be further observed and applied.
Using the experiential learning model provides a "discovery approach" for learning about oneself and relationships. As students learn about the experiential learning cycle they can begin to use it in all of their relationships. When they make an application of any one concept in a relationship, they have set up a new learning cycle--the activity. They can then ask themselves: What did I feel? What did I see? What patterns were going on? What does this mean in my relationship interactions? What new choices may I want to work into the interaction?

I give my students the role of being a ***player/coach*** in their relationships--including the structured activities designed for classroom use. As the player they experience what is happening. As the coach they step outside to watch what is taking place--the whats, so whats and now whats. They could either step back into the interaction as a player with new (or confirmed) choices or they could share fundamentals (the concepts) with other team members. They are asked to step outside of their interaction with their focus partner to observe what is taking place so that they may step back into the interaction with clearer understandings of what is taking place.

Using the Modified Experiential Model in the Classroom

Two major concepts, which dynamically impact relationships, are introduced in the early part of the course directed at the student's development of conceptual understanding. These major concepts are: Separating Worlds and Verification Feedback. Five supporting concepts include: Reactive Listening, Reflective Listening, Responsive Listening, Paraphrasing and Whole Person Feedback. The students prepare for the classroom experience by reading about the concepts with examples of the concept being used in relationship interaction. They further prepare for classroom participation by creating personal definitions of the concepts using the format of seeing how each concept works as a tool: What function each takes within interaction.

Brief description of these concepts are:

- Separating Worlds--the process of determining what message stimuli belongs to whom or where. Does the message originate within oneself, within a partner or as an aspect of the environment? Where would it be important to have the message be observed and understood before it is used as value for another person?

- Verification Feedback--the process used by a listener of feeding back images created about a speaker's (transmitter's) world so that the speaker can verify (confirm or clarify) the listener's understanding of the speaker's meanings. Images can be created through using one, or more, of these three channels of message stimuli: Verbal, nonverbal and supraverbal (impressions or hunches). [This is based on a new model of communication called the Human Communication Model, see Strong, 1993.]

- Reactive Listening--a process where a listener creates an image based on a speaker's stimuli message that is applied within the listener's world. (The image created may be seen as supportive--a positive reaction--or as challenging--a negative reaction--regardless of how accurate the created image represents the speaker's world, intent or meaning.)

- Reflective Listening--a process where the listener creates an image about the speaker's (sender's) world based on stimuli messages from the speaker's world with the intent of transmitting the image back to the speaker. The purpose of this reflective process is to gain clarification about the speaker's world for both the speaker and the listener.

- Responsive Listening--a process of making purposeful choice about, versus reaction to, images encompassing the speaker's world. Once the listener and speaker have understood--and many times clarified that understanding--an aspect within the speaker's world, the listener then makes a choice which will best support his/her own needs with minimizing negative influences for the speaker's world.

- Paraphrasing--a process of creating images about the speaker's world based on the content stimuli messages transmitted by the speaker. The listener then uses his/her own words to describe the image created which best represents the listener's understanding about the content of the speaker's world.

- Whole Person Feedback--the process of creating expanded images about the speaker's meanings as they fit within the wholeness of the sender's (speaker's) world. The expanded image includes the content message but has two additional elements. The emotional halo message is added to the content to give clarification to the meaning of the content and how it is to be processed. [The content and halo message interaction is based on Watzlawick, et. al., tentative axioms about communication processes--digital and analogic language or the content and relationship aspect.] Then a most important aspect is added--the context (or connecting links) in which the content message originated. Images created by the listener about the sender's world can be based on nonverbal and supraverbal (hunches or impressions) without any verbal content message stimuli. Context is often conveyed through supraverbal stimuli messages.

I have students divide into dyads--partner A and B. (There should only be one group, if any, where there are three partners A, B and an addition A or B in a triad.) Who is partner A? Partner B? [At this point I look to see where there are more males as A or B. I try to choose the most males for role reversal.] Partner [instructor chooses partner] B is the wife and partner (the other one) is the husband. [For the triad you can see if there are two wives or two husband and note that occasionally we have an odd couple.] As the wife your name is Mary and as the husband your name is Jack.

Depending upon time factors, I let them share with each other their personal definitions, and perhaps use examples, of each of the concepts to be explored or I have the students start with their roles as Jack and Mary. If they share their definitions with each other, I usually have a couple examples shared with the whole class.

One other introduction to the process of seeing the origin of the stimuli message (separating worlds) is to involve them in **complements/criticisms** interactions. How many of you like complements? Raise your hands high. How many like criticisms? Raise your hands high. Who owns the criticism or complement--that is where did it have it's origin? How did it fit in that world? What is the purpose of sending it? (Have you sent any complements or criticisms that were loaded with other meanings?)

I point out that gaining the greatest value for either the complement or criticism would come after knowing how it fit within the sender's world where it originated. That does not reduce the value but may well clarify it's value for the intended receiver. Once they have shared their definitions and/or we have used the interactions of complements and criticisms then they take their assigned roles as Jack or Mary.

Phase One--the Activity

Jack, look into Mary's eyes and wink at her. (You usually get a lot of nervous laughter at this point.) Mary, reach out and touch Jack in your best (you know how) way. Now close your eyes for a moment while I give you a little more of your history. You have been married 20 years and have 5 children. How does that feel? Where would you like your relationship to go? Experience your role in the family as wife or husband. (pause)

In your 20 plus years together you have had some good times. Think of one of the special times--which may be different from your partner's perceptions of a special time--but remember how you felt and what this meant to you. (I often ask them to think of a good time they have had with their focus partner and share that as thought it belonged in this assigned relationship.) How does this memory fit into your dreams about marriage, family and a special relationship with your partner? Now, I want you to take a moment and share your perception of this special time with your partner. BEGIN! [Allow a couple minutes for this nervous exchange.]

ASK: ARE WE HAVING FUN YET? Now, close your eyes again. (pause) You have also had some very disappointing distasteful times in your relationship. Recall one that still bothers you (pause) and express it to your partner. BEGIN!
STOP! It almost seems like you are having as much fun with this as you did with the positive experience. CLOSE YOUR EYES AGAIN.

HOLD ON, WE ARE GOING ON A FAST JOURNEY. [At some point someone may ask who is expressing the feelings and experiences. Your only response is YOU ARE THE ONE.] You have had more "not so good" times than "good times" and they are happening with greater intensity, greater frequency and lasting longer. Your life has been very stressful to the point of your choosing to check yourself into the local hospital in the mental ward. You have been there for six months and recognize that things are not getting any better. You have been away from the stress and pressures at home but real changes haven't taken place. While you are in the hospital, you talked with a couple other people who suggest that a particular marriage counselor may be of some help. Where you checked yourself into this hospital you can decide when you want to leave.

At home you contact the marriage counselor and set up some sessions. Your partner is not willing to go with you. After a couple sessions you and the counselor devise a way to get your partner involved. You continue counseling for five months and it seems to have dead-ended. The counselor, on your last visit says: "Get a divorce before you destroy each other." You go home to die. Divorce is out of the question for both you and your partner but for different reasons.

You know people have willed themselves dead. You are not sure how you will do this but living seems intolerable. You feel life slipping away as you grasp for anything to make you feel better and change the relationship. You are

afraid to die but you are also afraid to live. Life is terribly painful. [Pause and state.] Feel the awful pain--loneliness, depression, futility. Somehow you become aware of a week long, intensive therapy session for couples in another state. Several therapists work together. Your partner is very reluctant to go with you because of feeling burned in the last marriage counseling. Your partner is in enough pain that agreement to go is made.

The first couple days of the intensive therapy is sheer 'hell' but then the next couple days seem to improve. You even start to have some hope return. But the last day everything seems to get turned upside down and desperation sets in. As you leave, all three therapists tell you separately: "Get a divorce before you kill each other." You come home to die.

As you are putting a few things in order as you feel yourself dying, you call a friend you haven't visited with for several years. Your friend offers one more ray of hope. Your friend tells you of a course that they took which changed their life. Also that several older students are coming back to college. You could live in the university town during the week and go home on the week-ends. Your partner and family supported this one last option.

I know you were coming to class because your friend told me that you would be there. I recognized who you were because your physical being shook the entire first class session from the intensive pain you carried with you. Your first days at class were not the same as when you were a student here earlier but you managed. By the end of the first week you were feeling good about yourself. You had made a right choice. You went home to share this with your partner. The three hour drive home seemed so long. Saturday was a fairly neutral day but not as exciting as you had hoped it would be. By Sunday noon, the pressures were beginning to mount and you started back to school earlier than you had originally planed.

The second week in school went well but a major question came to your mind. Have you learned enough about communicating that this week-end will be any better? If you have the same, or similar, experience to last weekend then it will just be a re-run of the patterns. Should you even go home? At one point you find yourself half way there and weren't even sure how you decided to go. Then you recognized that you were sitting in your car in your driveway--in a daze. It was very late and no one was up. You finally went in. Saturday was okay but on Sunday it stated over. Your partner said to you: "Why don't you stay on indefinite period of time!" You agreed mentally but said nothing. (pause) "Feel how long indefinite is."

Over the next six weeks you learned more concepts and processes and had opportunities to practice the skills in group settings. You were able to listen to others and they had listened to you. Then it hit you. MOST OF THE PROBLEMS YOU AND YOUR PARTNER HAD REVOLVED AROUND THE CHILDREN. What would happen if your partner was to join you at your apartment and leave the children home? Again, somewhat reluctantly your partner agreed. You had butterflies in your stomach all week. There were even times when you felt sick in your stomach because of the anxiety. Have I learned enough to make this work? Will there be another chance if it doesn't work this time? You heard the car drive up Saturday morning, the door close and the doorbell ring. Your heart stopped beating momentarily. As you opened the door, these are the words your partner greeted you with: "I don't love you any more. There is no reason for you to come home."

TAKE A MOMENT AND TALK WITH YOUR PARTNER ABOUT THIS. BEGIN!

[While they are doing their discussion, I put this diagram on the board]

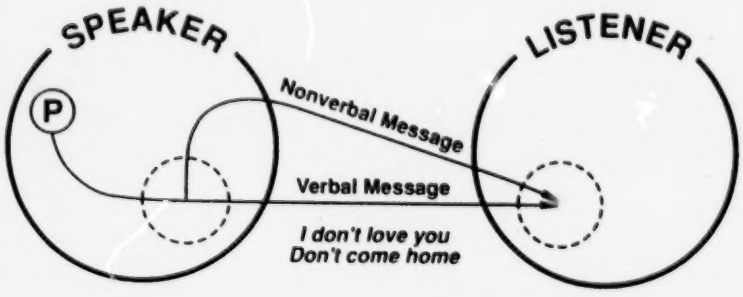


Diagram follows a new Human Communication Model, Strong 1993, see page 10.

Speaker creates a verbal stimuli message and nonverbal stimuli message from a self perception within the speaker's world related to intended listener

Phase Two--Sharing Something about the Activity

Here I usually call on two or three individuals to share with the whole class some of the feelings they experienced as the activity was in progress. How did you feel? What was your experience of yourself in the interaction? your partner in the interaction? What did you observe happening to you? Did you notice anything in particular happening to your partner as you discussed the situation? (Sometimes it may be helpful to suggest some possible feelings, such as, "Did you feel out of control? Did you feel angry at your partner? Did you feel the fear of dying or of living? Did you feel the despair? How did you feel when the counselor or therapists said get a divorce? Would you liked to have lived in that situation?")

Phase Three--Looking at What is Going On.

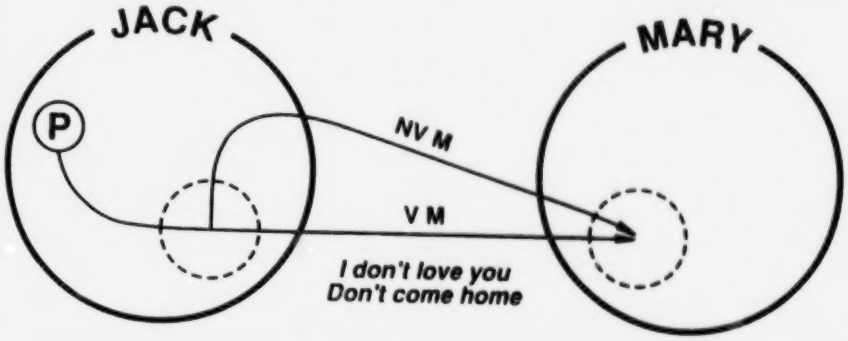
Which of you, as partners, were able to remain as Jack and Mary rather than slipping out and talking about Jack and Mary? (If you had some pairs who remained as Jack and Mary, get a couple comments they made to each other. Process them a little bit).

Who was it that went to the hospital and eventually came to class? How did your relationship maintain its regular interaction? If they weren't happy, what keeps them from changing how they interact? Have there been major interaction shifts over the years relating as a couple? How does a relationship like this maintain itself? [Remind them of the "player/coach" role--sometimes it is important to step outside and observe what is happening.]

Phase Four--Generalizations of Principles and Processes

What are some patterns (generalities) that are based on belief systems we have about ourselves and others that would suggest who went to the hospital, sought counseling, came to class? What beliefs do we have about child care that would lead to specific choices? (Mary came to class. How many men do you know that would check themselves into a mental ward at the hospital? How does this translate to sharing of feelings in a relationship?)

[Add: Jack as the Speaker and Mary as the Listener to the diagram or replace with this diagram.]



Jack creates the verbal stimuli message of: "I don't love you, don't come home" from perceptions about one or more experiences in his world which relate to Mary.

Now I want each of you to shift roles (if you haven't) and become the coach for your team members: Jack & Mary. It will be important to look at what is going on so that we can share some fundamentals of relationship interaction that will give Jack and Mary some new choices. To begin, what are some possible meanings in Jack's verbal message: "I don't love you. Don't come home?" (Depending on time, you can have total class interaction or have the dyads or small groups discuss some possibilities--I always end by drawing some generalizations within the total class.)

A- Jack is tired and frustrated and blames Mary for all that is happening--a continuation of a pattern.

B- Who does Jack not love? Has he ever loved himself? Can he offer what he doesn't have? How has he approached their relationship (approving, disapproving, or conditional interactions)?

C- Can you see Jack driving the three hours to come and kill the relationship--one counselor and three therapists have said to get a divorce.

D- Jack may feel like Mary is making too much out of the situation and he is basically satisfied with their relationship except for the times Mary is not doing her duties. HERE I INTRODUCE THE CONCEPT OF BRAIN SEX DIFFERENCES. (See attached for brief explanation.)

E- Allow for others from class members.

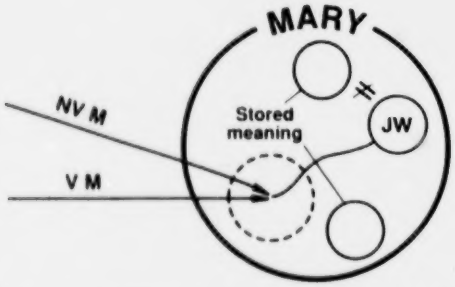
As their coach, both Jack and Mary have asked you to assist them in creating more love and companionship in their relationship--at least reduce the stress. How would you do that? (After some dyadic or small group interaction, I ask, "How would the concepts we have been studying apply in this situation?" Make a list of each concept and see how it would influence the interaction.)

A- Separating worlds: Who owns what messages? (Has Mary caused Jack's feelings? What happens if Mary takes this message into her world? What can Jack do with his perceptions and feelings if he dumps them--disowns them--on Mary?)

B- Verification Feedback: Mary creating an image about Jack's world and feeding the image back so that Jack can verify (confirm or clarify) Mary's understanding. One of the major benefits of using verification feedback--paraphrasing or whole person--in a situation like this is that a message that has often been dumped by the speaker and received by the listener no longer stays in the listener's world. Verification feedback eliminates reactive listening as the only way of listening. The listener may hear, and not understand or like, things involving their relationship but these messages go back to the speaker through verification feedback.

C- Reactive Listening: Mary creating an image about Jack's message and applying it within her own world--in this case there would be a negative reaction because his words do not appear to support Mary's wants or needs.

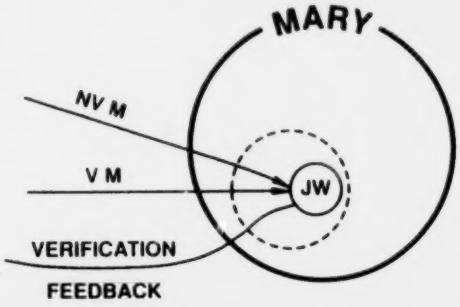
REACTIVE LISTENING



Mary creates an image in her perceiving self based on verbal and nonverbal stimulie messages about Jack's world and applies it to her world. In this particular situation, "not being loved and being unwelcome at home" don't fit with the stored meanings Mary has about herself and her relationship with Jack.

D- Reflective Listening: Getting the message back into Jack's world where he can begin to understand it and make some choices. (This aspect of Verification Feedback is to assist the speaker in gaining some personal insights about his/her own world--a purpose for listening that we have not given sufficient emphasis and study.)

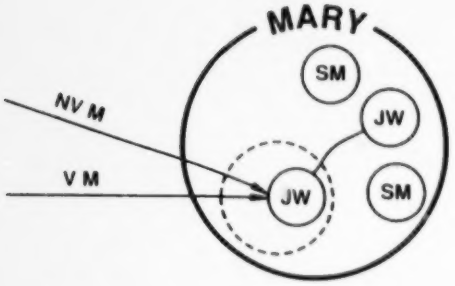
REFLECTIVE LISTENING



Mary creates an image about Jack's world in her perceiving self and transmits that image back to Jack over the verification feedback loop. This can assist Jack in understanding himself as well as gaining a clarified and/or confirmed understanding about Jack's world from Jack for Mary's needs.

E- Responsive Listening: Mary first uses reflective listening so that she and Jack are clear on what Jack's messages mean to him, then she chooses how she will act upon this up-dated image about Jack's world. It may be she will share her perceptions and ask Jack to do reflective listening for her or there may be other choices she will make--these will be based on confirmed or clarified images. Once Mary has some confirmed understandings about Jack's world then she can make purposeful choices to serve her interests and relationship interests. (See diagram next page.)

RESPONSIVE LISTENING

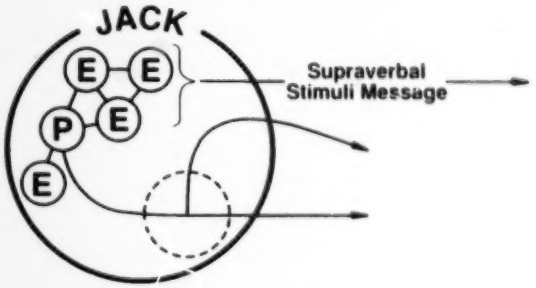


Mary creates an up-dated image about Jack's world which has been clarified and/or confirmed by Jack. Mary now chooses how she will respond to Jack to enrich her relationship. The most effective responses would come through images based on whole person feedback wherein the context and content are understood.

F- Paraphrasing: Mary would build her images about Jack's world based on the verbal content of what Jack has said and then transmit her images about Jack's world back to him using her own words. (An example of a paraphrase would be: "You don't think I should come home because you don't love me anymore?"--which is almost always given in question form for the speaker to determine the accuracy.)

G- Whole person feedback: Mary would assists Jack in self understanding by finding connecting links and enlarging personal perceptions. How is "I don't love you, don't come home" connected with other experiences and belief systems in Jack's life? [Draw other Events and Experiences in Jack's world and make connections.] This is where supraverbal messages (checking out impressions and hunches) will assist Mary in creating images about Jack's world, and when fedback to Jack, he will be able to see a larger set of dynamics operating in his world. It allows for Mary to have up-dated understanding about Jack's world.

WHOLE PERSON FEEDBACK



The listener assists the speaker in finding how the verbal content fits within the context (or connecting links to other experiences and stored meanings) of the speaker's world. Supraverbal stimuli messages are often important in understanding the context of a particular content message.

How would up-dated images for Jack and Mary (and each of us) allow them to respond to each other and to oneself more effectively? They could become aware of images held about self, other and relationship to include unrecognized beliefs, attitudes and values. Out-dated images are used as the basis for making choices if up-dated images do not replace them.

As a coach how can you assist Mary to start using reflective listening with Jack? [Ask some class members how they would handle it.] If they come up with "WHY" questions assist them in seeing that these create defensiveness--a need to justify oneself as compared to "HOW" questions or "WHAT" questions. "HOW" did this come about rather than "WHY" did you do that. If Mary doesn't have sufficient data from Jack to create an image to feedback OR IN THIS CASE where the image formed includes her or is painful to her, she can ask: "Could you put that in different words?" It is almost always important to add: "I want to understand what you mean"--as this bonds the speaker who wants to be understood.

Let's step aside one moment and talk about assumptions. Everybody makes assumptions to fill in missing data. The problems with assumptions are not: (1) that they are made on too little information, (2) that they may represent the needs/interests of the listener, or (3) that they may be quite inaccurate with true states of being. The problem is that they are not checked out by the listener. They become the reality regardless of how accurate or inaccurate they are.

We all make assumptions and need to develop an awareness for checking them out. If I think you are upset with me and I don't check it out, my choices still are based on my assumption. If I think you like a certain activity and I don't

check it out, my choices are still based on my assumption. LEARN TO CHECK OUT ASSUMPTIONS--this will allow us to recognize more quickly when we are making them.

Back to Mary and Jack. Mary had come to understand that Jack could make no new choices until he has come to understand his own world and how different parts are interconnected. Interconnected feelings and perceptions allow for new perceptions and new choices.

Mary listened to Jack for four hours in reflective ways. This allowed him to sort out many feelings and perceptions which he had stuffed over time. Mary described the experience as bitter/sweet. She heard things in Jack's world that will influence their relationship which she wasn't aware of; but she was able to get her world separated and not take his feelings and perceptions on as hers. She also sensed Jack's self understandings.

How does Jack view Mary now? Is she the enemy? Jack thanked her for listening. They were both exhausted and turned their attention to some fun interaction. The next day they went to church and then out to eat. Jack again thanked Mary for listening and said it was his turn to listen to her. (Sense the transition of feelings within this 24 hour period.) She asked if they could wait until they got back to the apartment because she didn't want to share some very deep feelings in a public place. On the way to the apartment, Jack started talking again and Mary listened for another three hours. As Jack was leaving he said, "You can come home anytime you want." Has Jack ever had anyone listen to him in this manner in his entire life? How many Jacks do you know who have not had a reflective listener to assist them?

Jack and Mary are both your team members. Jack says it is his turn to listen to Mary. What are your concerns? [There are two "flies in the ointment". What are they? Get student responses.]

A- Jack doesn't know how to listen. He would be a reactive listener--turning into a speaker and judging in terms of right/wrong or approval/disapproval.

B- From an outside perspective it appears that Jack's experience of being listened to was more "cathartic" than a development of "new perspectives". How does this influence the relationship? (Old patterns will persist.)

As the coach you have another concern. How does Jack learn to be a reflective and responsive listener? He won't allow Mary to teach him. He operates from a belief system that men know more than women. How can you work with your partner so as to not create defensiveness as you express the concepts you are learning?

[As an extra credit question: What was the purpose of designing this structured exercise where each of you thought you were the one going to the hospital, coming to school, etc.? (The few times I have run this experience and designated that Mary was the one, the partner representing Jack doesn't seemed to get as involved in the interaction.) This is to show how often we have interactions in relationships and do so much reactive listening that "no one knows" who owns what or at times even what they are arguing about. Separating out who owns what clarifies relationship interaction.]

Phase Five--Applying Principles and Concepts in Other Relationships

How can you apply the concepts and processes in relationships other than your relationship with your focus partner? Share with your current partner how you have experienced, at least one of the concepts working (or how it could have worked) in another relationship.

Recognize, and acknowledge to yourself, that it will take you time and effort to make some shifts and you may find yourself recognizing later on what could have worked better as you look back on the interaction which took place.

I have each class member fill out learning's about self from today's interaction. This includes looking for some similarity between Jack & Mary and the student with his/her focus partner. Then they select two of the concepts processes to use in their focus relationship by the next class period and report to today's partner.

Thank your partner for 20 some years of marriage and for learning something about yourself and relationships today!

A note on Brainsex difference in communication dynamics

In their book, *Brainsex: The Real Difference Between Men and Women*, Anne Moir and David Jessel offer several considerations on how men and women perceive the world differently based on how their respective brain processes work. (1) Males tend to compartmentalize--see things within a limited time and space frame--which allows for extra concentration, whereas, females tend to see the global picture--the relationship between more things in a broader time and space frame; (2) Males view the world of things--what they are, how they work and the space they occupy--resulting is less emotional transaction, whereas, females who experience more emotion look at the wholeness of relationships rather than the parts separately; (3) Males communication is more in terms of vocabulary of action--doing things or sharing activities, whereas, females communications involve verbal self-disclosure and sharing of confidences and feelings; (4) Female brains are designed to care for people and relationships, whereas, male brains are set for finding solutions; (5) In the realm of sexual involvement, female's brain function calls for intimacy through sharing feelings, security and fidelity for a turn on, whereas, male brain function can separate love and sex and work on the visual (objects) part of the interaction. BOTH MALES AND FEMALES can use either side of their respective brains or use the interaction of both sides--but this requires awareness beyond the natural tendency of how the brains are different. Jack and Mary can be fighting about finances in the kitchen and be very upset with each other. As they move to the bedroom Mary carries the "wholeness" of their relationship with her while Jack can go into the "compartment" of sex as a physical activity.

Gary Smalley and John Trent draw on research about the male and female brain functions as they offer some of the same conclusions of Moir and Jessel, but also indicate that 20% of the females tend to favor the left brain hemisphere and 20% of the males tend to favor the right brain hemisphere. They then adds some very practical applications for communicating with one another.

References:

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Strong, John R., *Relationship Enrichment: Applying People Skills to Strengthen Your Relationships*. University Bookstore, Ames, IA., 1993.

Watzlawick, Paul; Beavin, Janet H.; and Jackson, Don D., *Pragmatics of Human Communication*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1967.

STEPS IN USING THE ADAPTED PFEIFFER AND JONES EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING CYCLE

1. Determine the learning objective. Is it a skill to be learned, a process to be experienced, a concept or principle to be understood, or a combination of these learnings.

2. What activity would give the participants an interaction within themselves and/or between one another that can be experienced through guided observations to reach the desired outcome. It is not necessary to have the skill, principle, process or concept directly exposed. Through self discovery of inductive experiencing the meanings become personally understood.

3. Sharing of the experience as observed by each individual allows for personal ownership which enhances the next three steps. This can be done by personal reflection and writing, sharing with one or two group members, and/or some sharing within the total group.

4. **WHAT** What was experienced? What kind of feelings were experienced? How did the interaction affect oneself and one's partner? How does this make a difference for the individual or the relationship? What were some of the patterns of interaction?

5. **SO WHAT** follows the **WHAT** of step four. How can what has been experienced in the structured activity be generalized to other settings and other relationships. Are there general SKILLS, PRINCIPLES, PROCESSES OR CONCEPTS that apply to more than the immediate interaction? How might different settings or relationships influence the generalizations which have been made?

6. **NOW WHAT?** This is the application phase where the personal learnings are transformed from the group interaction to personal relationships. What follow-up is important to reinforce the learnings? What new observations may come as a result of making applications to a specific relationship?

7. The most effective learning comes as participants learn the process of the Experiential Learning Cycle. As they learn that each activity can become a means of learning about themselves and others they will have greater motivation for making choices to enrich themselves and their relationships.

ACTION: The Involvement

STOP: Observe, Feel and Own Experience

LOOK: What Patterns or Dynamics are Interacting,

CHOOSE: Select Skill, Principle, or Process,

COMMIT: Take Action and Follow-Up.